

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY
Haines Area
COASTAL REGION

FOREST LAND USE PLAN/PRELIMINARY DECISION
ACMP CONSISTENCY REVIEW

for the

WALKER 1 TIMBER SALE

SE 715 H

ADL 106327

January 1997

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Purpose: The purpose of this Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) is to provide sufficient information to reviewers to ensure that the best interest of the state will be served by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Forestry, Haines Area, offering for sale an estimated 398 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber by sealed competitive bid. The estimated volume consists of 312 MBF of spruce sawlog and utility log volume. The sale also contains an estimated 86 MBF of hemlock sawlog and utility log volume.

This timber will be harvested using a clear-cut silvicultural system. Harvest unit size is approximately 17 acres. The contract will run for 18 months.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of this proposed timber sale with regards to the AS 38.05.035 decision. Comments should be mailed to the Division of Forestry, P.O. Box 263, Haines, Alaska 99827. Comments must be received at the Division of Forestry no later than February 25, 1997 in order to be considered in the Final Decision of whether the sale will be held in whole or in part. To be eligible to appeal the final decision, a person must have provided written comment by February 25, 1997.

- B. Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) Consistency: The purpose of this document is to provide adequate information to ACMP and other reviewers to evaluate whether this project is consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program. DNR believes the activity described in this FLUP is consistent with ACMP. See section VII for DNR's consistency analysis.

Pursuant to AS 46.40.096(d)(1), we are requesting consistency review comments for the proposed project from state resource agencies, affected coastal districts, and other interested parties. Written comments must be received by February 25, 1997 to preserve your right to file a petition under AS 46.40.100(b)(1) seeking a review by the Coastal Policy Council of the proposed consistency determination.

- C. Five Year Plan: This sale has been listed in all of the Division of Forestry's Five Year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS) for the SE Areas, Coastal Region since it was first listed in the schedule for fiscal years 1992 to 1996. It is listed in the current edition for fiscal years 1997 to 2001. The dead and beetle infested spruce trees have already lost some market value and will continue to lose value if harvest is delayed further.

- D. Location: This timber sale is located in the Walker Lake area approximately 28 miles west northwest of Haines, Alaska (see attached map). The legal description of this proposed action is as follows: Within portions of Section 35, T28S, R54E, Copper River Meridian. The action is within the boundaries of the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area. This sale is located within the Haines Borough and is outside the boundaries of the City of Haines Coastal Management Program. The nearest regional native corporation is the Sealaska Native Corporation. Klukwan is the nearest community, and is located about 6 miles east of the sale area. The sale area can be found on the United States Geological Service 1:63,360 Quadrangle map titled Skagway B-4.
- E. Title, Classification and Other Active or Pending Interests:
The sale area is located on general grant lands within the Haines State Forest. These lands at one time were part of the Original Mental Health Land Trust. A court settlement approved on December 6, 1994 removed these lands from the Mental Health Trust and reclassified them as general grant lands. This settlement has been appealed. This land is subject to the Haines State Forest Management Plan (HSFMP). This sale lies within subunit 3f of Management Unit number 3, Klehini River, of the HSFMP. This subunit has a primary land use designation of forestry and a secondary land use designation of recreation. The management intent for this area is to manage primarily for commercial timber harvest. This action is consistent with the guidelines established in the HSFMP.
- F. Objectives:
1. The primary objectives of this timber sale are to salvage timber affected by the spruce bark beetle, accelerate reforestation and provide jobs from logging and wood processing. This sale will improve forest growth and vigor by replacing dead and insect infected dying stands of timber with new healthy stands while protecting and maintaining other resource values. The actions authorized under this action will follow the constitutional mandate of sustained yield and shall adhere to multiple use management.
 2. To follow DNR's constitutional mandate to encourage the development of the state's renewable resources, making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest. Sustain and promote a healthy timber industry in the state, through providing a secure source of timber for harvest, and by providing a source of raw material (logs) for local manufacturing plants (e.g., mills) while protecting other resources such as fish and wildlife.
 3. To enhance the state's economy. This sale will provide an estimated 8,000.00 in royalties to the state in the form of stumpage receipts; an infusion

of approximately \$ 80,000.00 to the state's economy through wages and purchases; and jobs and business, not only for Alaskan residents and companies directly involved in the timber industry, but also for those who provide supplies, equipment and sundries.

II. LEGAL AUTHORITY

The department is taking this action under the authority of AS 38.05.035(e) (Best Interest Finding); AS 38.05.110-120; 11 AAC 71 (Timber Sale Regulations); AS 41.17.010-.950 and 11 AAC 95 (Forest Resources and Practices Statutes and Regulations); AS 46.40; 6 AAC 80 (Alaska Coastal Management statutes and regulations).

III. ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

Case File ADL 106327 and the Haines State Forest Management Plan constitute the administrative record for this finding.

IV. DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

A. BACKGROUND

Topography: The sale is situated on a broken sloped hillside. General slopes average 40% and range from 0 to 70% with a few steeper pitches. A pitch is generally described as a slope of ground less than 100 feet in length. This area generally faces northeast. The elevation of the sale area is from 1200 to 1500 feet above sea level.

Soils: Soils in the sale area are classified as a Klukwan-Foad Complex. These soil types are characterized by an shallow organic layer of approximately 2 inches. Soil depth is moderately deep (20-40") to deep (over 60") and well drained. The mineral surface is a silt loam with the subsoil a sandy loam. The substratum is a very cobbly sandy loam to a depth of 60" or more and in some places, a schist bedrock at 20 to 30".

No caves or cave features were found during the timber cruise of the sale.

Water bodies There no fish streams in this proposed sale area. There is a small unnamed lake that lies approximately 500 feet to the west of the harvest unit. Three small creeks will be crossed by the access road, two of which are found within the harvest unit. These will be protected by directional falling and split-line yarding away from the creek courses. There are no other wetlands or riparian vegetation that influence the design and/or layout of this proposed sale.

Stand Conditions: The existing stands are a Sitka spruce-western hemlock mix with scattered alder patches through and adjacent to the harvest area. Stand age is around 180 years old. Spruce averages 42 trees and 139 square feet of basal area per acre while hemlock averages 24.8 trees and 58 square feet of basal area per acre. Spruce trees average 24.6 inches DBH (diameter breast high) and hemlock average 20.7 inches DBH. The understory consists of small suppressed hemlock and shrub species such as devils club, blueberry, rusty menziesia and other smaller shrubs and forbs.

The spruce component in this stand has been significantly infested by spruce bark beetle. Approximately 56% of the spruce is dead or infested. Due to the current intensity of the beetle infestation, it is expected to continue, resulting in even greater stand mortality. If left as is, stand species composition may be altered to a predominantly hemlock stand. The net yield of merchantable wood fiber has declined and will continue to decline over the next few years as decay continues in the beetle killed spruce. The lower net yield and market value will result in higher development costs in the future.

Wildlife: Some moose and bear sign was noted during the timber cruise of the area. In addition to moose and bear, the area may support the following species of wildlife; marten, lynx, wolverine, wolf, porcupine, squirrel, various birds and other small woods mammals. There is no evidence of high density bear use within this proposed area. There are no known raptor nests within the proposed sale area and the area has not been identified as important winter range for moose or goats. The HSFMP in a strategy to minimize the impacts of harvest on wildlife, prohibits timber harvest on about 21,595 acres of commercial old growth timber. It further spreads the harvest of the remaining 49,231 acres of commercial timber over a relatively long period of time. In addition, 13,360 acres of inoperable or inaccessible timber and the 49,000 acre Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve will not be harvested.

Recreation: The Sunshine Mountain road/Herman Lake road receives extensive use by recreationists for hunting, berry picking, hiking, snowmobiling, skiing, wildlife viewing and sight seeing. Most of this use is limited to the road corridor. The access road to be reconstructed with this sale has been used by recreationists accessing Walker Lake in the past. This road is now overgrown with alder so that it is unusable except when very deep snows cover the alder. This sale will reconstruct this road to within 1/2 to 3/4 mile of Walker Lake providing easier access to the recreation area there and will provide future access when another timber sale completes the road to near Walker Lake. There are no airplane access points within the proposed sale area. This area is not known to have unique tourism values. At this time, there are no known commercial recreation operations that use this area. All terrain vehicle (ATV) use of this area is not known.

Cultural: There are no cultural resources known to exist in this area. The harvest areas and logging activity will not impact known historic or cultural sites. If cultural or historic sites are discovered, this finding will be modified to protect those resources.

Scenic: Visual impact from the sale will be low. The harvest area will not be readily visible from the Haines highway. The sale will be visible to travelers on portions of the Herman Lake road.

Land Use: There are presently no other permitted land uses in the proposed area. No agricultural use or grazing is known to occur. Traditional use areas may exist but the sale will not adversely impact these uses. The affected watersheds will continue to be managed according to the land use designation found in the HSFMP.

Current Land Use: Currently, the public lands adjacent to this proposed sale area are being managed for timber, recreation, and fish & wildlife habitat.

Transportation: Main access to this area is by the Little Salmon Logging Road to the Sunshine Mountain Road/Herman Lake Road. These roads are on general grant lands and University of Alaska lands and are public use access roads.

B. EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE

The effects of the proposed timber sale will vary depending on species. Species that prefer early successional vegetation will likely benefit for a period of time. Non-winter browse production may be increased for a period of years after harvest from the increased heat and sunlight that the openings will provide. Some increase in browse vegetation growth may occur even without harvesting this timber due to the loss of needles of the dead spruce. Early successional vegetation is valuable for moose browse in summer and low-snow winters. The retention of adjacent unharvested stands will provide cover, winter forage, protection from deep snow, travel corridors and escape cover. As the new stand develops, in 30 to 40 years spruce and hemlock will occupy the site shading out the understory so that these benefits of increased browse production may be lost. It is expected that adjacent areas will be harvested at this time providing increased browse to compensate for this loss. The HSFMP intends to create a mosaic of stands in different age classes to provide benefits to many different species of wildlife. Logging is expected to have few direct impacts on the population. Harvesting activities may displace animals temporarily.

Impacts on the bear population are anticipated to be low. Bears may benefit from the increase in early successional vegetation following timber harvest as well. Wintertime forage and shelter is not a major concern for bears due to hibernation. Their welfare is traditionally most threatened by habitat conversion and improved hunter access. There is anticipated to be some impact to the population through habitat conversion.

Harvesting activities may displace animals temporarily. Hunter access will be improved somewhat with this sale. The Division of Forestry can work with the Department of Fish & Game (DF&G) to control hunter access if necessary.

C. EFFECTS ON FISHERIES

The proposed harvest is anticipated to have minimal impacts on fisheries. Only intermittent water quality streams exist within the harvest unit and these will be protected by directional falling and split-line yarding.

D. EFFECTS ON SUBSISTENCE

The subject area has not been designated as a subsistence zone. This action is anticipated to have no deleterious effects on subsistence activities.

E. EFFECTS ON RECREATION

DNR expects the following recreation uses in the sale area: hunting, gathering activities, hiking, snowmobiling and skiing. This timber sale will provide for improved recreational access into the sale area by reconstructing a road part way towards Walker Lake. It will also provide for continued recreational access as existing roads will receive needed maintenance.

F. SUSTAINED YIELD/ALLOWABLE CUT

The Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17.060 (c)) and Article VII Section 4 of the State Constitution require that State Forest land be managed on a sustained yield basis. Sustained yield has been defined in the Forest Resources and Practices Act AS 41.17.950(15):

"Sustained Yield" means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high level of annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of forest land and water without significant impairment of the productivity of the land and water, but does not require that timber be harvested in a non-declining yield basis over a rotation period.

The allowable cut harvest for the Haines State Forest has been determined to be 69.6 million board feet (MMBF) per decade. Over the past decade, from January 1, 1987 through December 31, 1996, 40.3 MMBF of timber have been harvested from the Haines State Forest or about 58% of the allowable harvest. This sale will contribute to the allowable cut volume.

G. REGENERATION

The area will be harvested by a clear-cut silvicultural system with a single harvest unit of 17 acres in size. Due to the availability of seed trees after harvesting, there should be sufficient seed to establish a new crop naturally. Hemlock in the understory is expected to respond to the increased heat and sunlight and to add to the future stand. To ensure adequate regeneration the state may plant Sitka spruce in the harvest area. It is expected that the species composition of the future stands will be very similar to the existing stand.

H. HARVEST METHODS

The silvicultural prescription is clear cutting. Cable yarding will be required and equipment use will be restricted to the road surface.

I. EROSION

There are two soil erosion concerns - surface erosion and mass wasting of soil and debris. Surface erosion is primarily caused by road construction. Surface erosion will be minimized by strict adherence to the contract guidelines and Forest Resources and Practices Act standards.

With regard to mass wasting and debris avalanches, such events normally occur on slopes over 62 percent (62%). Most of the slopes in the harvest area are less than 62%. The use of a cable system should minimize this risk on the short pitches exceeding 62% slope. Harvesting may be suspended during periods of saturated soil conditions to assure there is minimal soil disturbance.

J. EFFECTS ON MINING

There has been no known active mining activity in the vicinity of this proposed sale. There is little known current mining activity in the harvest area.

K. MATERIAL SOURCES

Approximately 2,000 feet of road reconstruction and 2,600 feet of new road construction are necessary to access the sale area. Material sources have not yet been identified and are typically identified during road construction along the road course. DNR will consider other land uses when approving material sources.

L. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Besides generating an estimated \$8,000 in royalties to the state, the proposed sales will create economic benefits in Haines and possibly other parts of Alaska. The total economic impact of this sale to the statewide economy is estimated to be \$80,000. The Haines business community will receive direct economic benefits from providing support services for the operators such as fuel, food, housing, medical and miscellaneous supplies. The residents of Haines will receive an indirect benefit through taxes paid to the city and borough by the operator and the employees and their families during the course of the timber harvest operation.

The timber sale will have an effect on local employment by generating an estimated 3 to 6 jobs directly associated with the harvest. The sale is expected to benefit the local economy by providing much needed jobs and possibly forest products for the local forest products industry. The sale of these logs adds potential employment opportunities and economic contributions to the community. This action is not expected to result in starting up the mill or adversely impacting any of the other industries in Haines. The total sale value of the products produced from the logs in this action is estimated to be \$ 169,000.

V. MARKET CONDITIONS

At present there is a high demand for local forest products. The local market includes domestic sawlogs, houselogs, and firewood. Domestic sawlogs may be sold to local sawmills as has occurred in the recent past. The export market is also good for the higher quality logs. The pulp or chip market is extremely depressed and demand is minimal to nonexistent at this time. The closure of the Ketchikan Pulp Mill is evidence of this low market condition and may severely affect the marketability of this sale. The demand from the local and export markets are expected to remain high over the length of this proposed contract. It is expected that the low grade wood from this sale will go into the local firewood market.

The economic conditions in the general vicinity of this proposed sale are fair. The current local economy is based on logging, fishing, and tourism. The local sawmill, historically the largest employer in the community, has been closed since April of 1991. Several small mobile dimension sawmills exist in the valley and have purchased most of the smaller sales over the past year.

VI. OPTIONS

After a review of the material and information discussed above, the following alternatives should be considered:

1. To continue the sale as proposed.
2. To modify the sale by making it larger or smaller.
3. Offer the sale at another time.
4. Not offer the sale.

A discussion of the four alternatives follows:

1. We believe that this is the best alternative to salvage the beetle killed timber, accelerate regeneration, develop a source of logs for the timber industry, and improve forest vigor. It also meets DNR's constitutional mandate encouraging the development of the state's renewable resources. The proposed action would also make use of the beetle killed spruce prior to further loss of market value.
2. The sale size was selected to salvage as much of the dead and dying trees as possible without removing all of the trees from the area and to provide harvest opportunities to small sale operators. Increasing the size of the sale would be possible by extending the salvage to other road systems and additional drainages. Decreasing the size of the sale would likely result in an unsold timber sale. A smaller sale would not offer enough volume to amortize the cost of road construction necessary to complete the sale. Decreasing the size of the sale would leave much of the dead and dying trees in the sale area unharvested.
3. This alternative would fail to meet many of the objectives of the sale. Decay in dead trees sets in rapidly creating a loss in market value particularly within the first five years. Any delay would cause a considerable loss in net market value.
4. This alternative would result in not meeting any of the objectives outlined for this management action. Utilization of the forest resource would not be achieved, there would be no contribution to the state and local economy, and there would be no restoration of forest health. Regeneration in the proposed sale area would be significantly delayed and a type change would occur in the stand from spruce-hemlock to a predominantly hemlock stand.

VII ACMP CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

This area is not within a district coastal program, and is therefore subject to statewide standards (6 AAC 80). There are no known geophysical hazards or areas of historic or archaeological importance within the proposed sale area. Recreational and

subsistence use of the area is low; no seafood processing is designated to occur in this area; there is no grazing or agriculture use of the area. Therefore, the sale does not conflict with the standards on geophysical hazards; historic, prehistoric, and archaeological resources; fish and seafood processing; subsistence and recreation; agricultural use.

This offering is consistent with the habitat standard because the Forest Practices Regulations preempt the habitat standards enacted under AS 46.40

In addition, the sale does not cause an impediment to existing or future transportation or utility corridors, and is therefore consistent with that standard.

Laws and regulations regarding timber harvesting and the quality of air, land and water will apply, ensuring consistency.

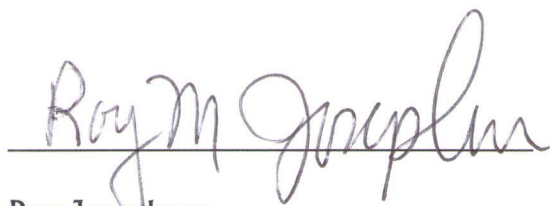
VII. PRELIMINARY FINDING AND DECISION

The purpose of this decision is to determine if the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, shall make available timber located in portions of Section 35, T28S, R54E, Copper River Meridian.

After due consideration of all pertinent information and alternatives, I have reached the following Preliminary Decision: To offer the sale as proposed.

In addition, I find that this preliminary decision satisfies the objective as stated in this document and it is in the best interest of the state to proceed with this action.

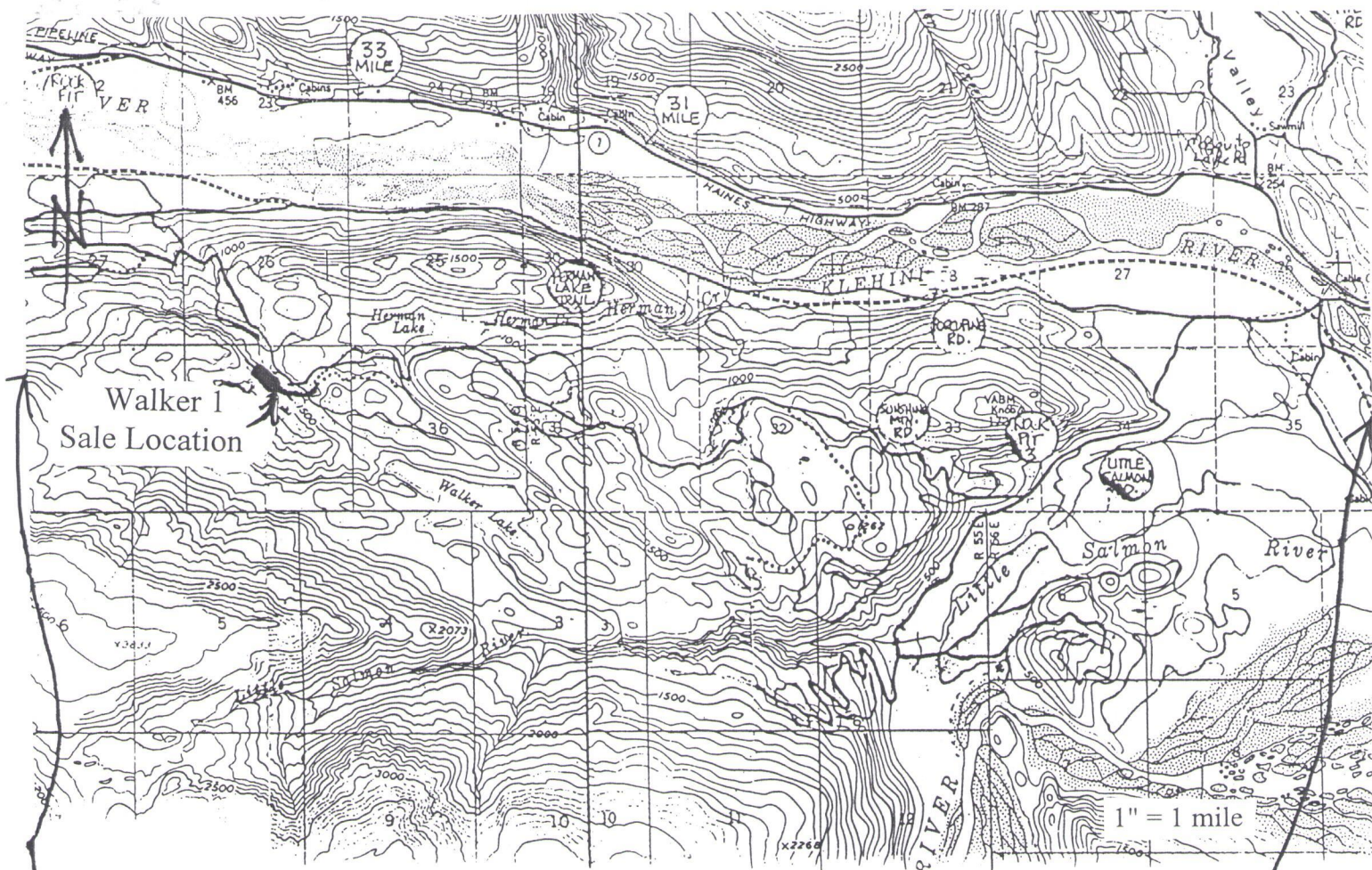
This decision also contains DNR's consistency analysis. DNR believes that this action is consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program.



Roy Josephson
Haines Area Forester

1-23-97

Date



Vicinity Map

Walker 1

SE-715-H

The map shows a topographic representation of a land area. Contour lines are drawn at 100-foot intervals, with labels for 1500, 1600, and 1700 feet. A network of roads is shown, with some segments marked with 'x' symbols. Handwritten annotations include 'Lake' in two locations, 'W.S. 1562.1' near a lake, and '1647.0' near a contour line. A legend box in the upper right corner provides details about the map's content and scale.

Sale Area Map	
Walker 1	
SE-715-H	
Key	
Harvest Unit Area-	(Symbol: a circle with an 'x' inside)
Existing Roads-	(Symbol: a solid line)
Roads to be reconstructed-	(Symbol: a dashed line)
New Road Construction	(Symbol: a line with cross-ticks)
Scale - 1" = 400 feet	
0 100' 200' 400' 800'	

Walker 1

SE-715-H

Key

Harvest Unit Area-

Existing Roads-

Roads to be reconstructed-

New Road Construction ==

Scale - 1" = 400 feet

0 100' 200' 400'

0	100'	200'	400'	800'
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